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1789.

REFLECTIONS

ON THE

CONSEQUENCES

OF

HIS MAJESTY'S RECOVERY

FROM

HIS LATE INDISPOSITION.

IN

A LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF
IRELAND.



LONDON:

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1789

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T O T H E

PEOPLE OF ENGLAND.

FEBRUARY 16, 1789.

THE mental alienation of a Sovereign, is a case that has seldom occurred in the history of the world. Providence, that has undoubtedly led nations as well as individuals to the obedience of wisdom through the school of affliction, has not often seen fit to distress a people with so signal calamity. You cannot therefore be sufficiently enlightened by the examples of former

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ages ; you must recur to the principles upon which all governments are founded. In this recourse, and in the right application of these principles, it is only by attending to the united efforts of many understandings that you can be preserved from mistake and injury.

I am myself unbiaſſed and impartial. The faculties I poſſeſs have been devoted to your ſervice. The vigils of a life, now arrived at its meridian, have been ſpent in the inveſtigation of political truth ; and it has been my ardent deſire to apply the reſult of my enquiries to the ſervice of my country. I am unconnected with party. In what I have to offer I may myſelf be deceived ; but you may reſt aſſured I will not willingly deceive you in the ſmalleſt trifle.

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Do not mistake the object of these professions. Do not imagine I desire to be credited upon my bare word. The direct contrary is my intention. By advancing my claim with no common firmness, I am anxious to rouse your vigilance. I would have you carefully watch every step of my argument. I have no doubt, that the farther I am heard, the more clearly will it appear to every man of discernment, that I am too daring for party, and too honest for faction.

It is only integrity, open, unquestionable integrity, that can shelter me amidst the extreme delicacies of the subject I have to treat ; but that shield is broad enough for my protection. Ministers have been known, in the sunshine of their power, who have allowed personal feeling to get the better of public utility ; who have trenched upon the

liberty of the press, for the poor gratification of personal revenge. But the man is yet to be found, who would make an example of another, because he was the friend of his country ; and hold him up to public vengeance, because he was bold enough to inculcate salutary truth. This kind of persecution I do not court ; but certain it is, from this kind of persecution I would not fly.

But, though to the threats of power and the frowns of greatness I am invulnerable, there is a view of my subject in which I feel the extremest sensibility. I observe my countrymen universally impressed with a sensation of joy. I hear you exclaim—" The
 " sovereign is recovered : we shall no longer
 " afford a melancholy spectacle in the eyes
 " of Europe : we are no longer reduced to
 " grope after the principles of the constitu-
 " tion

“ tion amidst the musty rolls of three cen-
 “ turies back, and of a period of civil con-
 “ fusion : we are returning to the mild
 “ and well-poised direction of affairs, un-
 “ der which we have so long flourished.”

When I observe this general alacrity of mind, can I refrain from observing?—

“ Alas ! who then am I, that I should
 “ oppose the sentiments of an united na-
 “ tion ; that, when every heart is expanded
 “ with gratitude and pleasure, I should
 “ come forward with a melancholy coun-
 “ tenance, and an ill-boding voice, to in-
 “ form you that this joy is deceitful ; and
 “ that the circumstances which occasion it
 “ may be attended with the most fatal
 “ effects ?” I feel something within me,
 that tells me I was not formed to mar the
 general joy, and to interrupt the most amia-
 ble and delightful ebullitions of the soul,
 by an ill-timed and misanthropic severity.

But there is a consideration, my countrymen, that at once puts to flight the idea of an indulgent forbearance. It is, that indulgence now may be pregnant with ruin hereafter ; that it were better that a momentary effusion, an intemperance of the soul which prevents you from discerning the irradiations of reason, should be suspended, than that you should plunge blindfold from a precipice ; the very recollection of which makes me shudder.

In reviewing the situation of my country, one of the first things that occurred to me was what I have already stated—that there are few similar instances upon record in the history of the world. I am sorry I must now add, that those instances have been unfortunate. To call them to your recollection may, by interested men, be thought invidious ; to reasonable men it cannot

cannot fail to appear salutary. Fortunately for us, I am at liberty to pass over with perfect security such monsters as Caligula and others; men indeed who suffered an alienation of mind, but whose alienation appears to have sprung from the ferocious barbarity of their natures, as it led them to the commission of still more atrocious barbarities. In the character of our present sovereign, we have a perfect security against the revival of scenes, the most infamous that ever stained the annals of mankind. He, who never authorized one act of deliberate torture, would not, if he could, in any state of mind, be the perpetrator of such nefarious wickedness.

Two instances occur in modern history as favourable, if we consider them under the head of personal character, as could possibly be wished. Charles the Sixth of

France, and Henry the Sixth of England, appear to have been both of them of dispositions mild, amiable, and benevolent. They sought the happiness of the people, though they found—their destruction ! The reign of each is beside sufficiently long, to enable us to form a perfectly competent judgment of the consequences their situation and government were likely to produce.

The reign of Charles the Sixth extended from the year 1380 to the year 1422, through a period of something more than forty-two years. He succeeded Charles the Wise, a prince, who whatever defects we may impute to him, governed his country with a steady hand and uniform measures, and reduced the kingdom to a state of tranquility and regular obedience, very uncommon in those barbarous ages. The young monarch, who acceded to the crown
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in the thirteenth year of his age, was left in the hands of his three uncles, the duke of Anjou, the duke of Berry, and Philip the Hardy, first duke of Burgundy. Being naturally of an easy and pliable disposition, he submitted to their control much longer than the regulations of the monarchy required ; and at length assumed the reigns of government in the year 1388, at the instigation of his brother the duke of Orleans.

It was in the year 1393, that he was first seized with the symptoms of insanity. He was then engaged in a military expedition against a rebellious subject, and happening casually to be left almost alone in the course of the march, a figure dressed in white burst from an adjacent forest, and seizing the bridle of his horse, commanded him to desist from his expedition.

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The unfortunate monarch concluded the appearance to be preternatural; and soon after falling into a transport of violence, exclaimed that he was betrayed, and wounded several of his attendants. He was reconducted to Paris, and appeared to recover his reason. But, being present at a masquerade, and chusing a dress composed of resin and other combustible materials, he was very dangerously burned with a torch, by the duke of Orleans; and, in consequence of the terror he suffered, became more distempered than ever.

The scenes which follow are such as humanity would wish to consign to eternal oblivion, were it not that the records of past ages form one of the most valuable sources of instruction for the present and for future ages. The people of Paris,
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not being able to persuade themselves that what had happened at the ball was the fruit of accident, were exasperated against the duke of Orleans; and the enterprising Burgundy, taking advantage of their disposition, seized upon the reins of government. But Isabella of Bavaria, the consort of Charles, was of too ambitious a character to suffer his usurpation, and accordingly formed a coalition with the duke of Orleans, by whose assistance she changed the administration of affairs. This coalition soon degenerated into a connection of the most disgraceful kind. Isabella forgot her husband and her king; the duke of Orleans, who was already married, was or pretended to be enamoured with her, and they lived in open adultery. During these scenes of shameless profligacy, every personal attention to the unfortunate sovereign was disregarded, and in one of the paroxysms of

of his malady he was suffered to remain five months without going to bed, without changing his linen, without applying any remedy to a wound he had made by keeping a piece of iron for some time buried in his flesh, and which threatened a mortification.

So unnatural a situation of things could not continue. But the remedy, as too frequently happens in these cases, was worse than the disease. The detestation, which the names of Isabella and her paramour universally excited, encouraged John the Fearless, the son and successor of Philip the Hardy, duke of Burgundy, to cause his political rival to be assassinated in the very streets of Paris. To this atrocious proceeding, he added the dangerous precedent of a public avowal and justification. His conduct upon this occasion was the source of the famous controversy respecting

ing tyrannicide, which was at length authoritatively decided against the partizans of the duke of Burgundy in the council of Constance.

John the Fearless may be regarded as one of the most mischievous characters in the annals of history. He was munificent in his transactions, affable in his manners, and skilled in all the arts by which popularity is most successfully courted. In every reverse of fortune the bulk of the inhabitants of Paris were inviolably attached to him. But it was impossible that his boundless ambition, his unprincipled conduct, and still more the open murder of the first prince of the blood, should not excite against him many enemies. The partizans of the duke of Orleans, who now bore the appellation of Armagnacs, from the name of their present leader, with

with the queen at their head, maintained a perpetual struggle against his assumed power. Each party by turns got the wretched shadow of a sovereign into their hands, and authorised their proceedings with his name. His returns of reason, as they were called, and his relapses to manifest insanity, frequently recurred three or four times in the course of a year. In the first case he was a passive puppet in the hands of his keepers, and in the last they openly usurped the government without being at the trouble to seek for so much as a pretence to cover their odious proceedings.

A situation like this naturally led to the most fatal extremes. The contending parties had laid aside all pretence to character, and the action of the Duke of Burgundy seemed to authorise every thing that

that was atrocious. Both sides flew to arms, and the nation was speedily desolated with all the horrors of a civil war. The lowest orders of the metropolis were enlisted into a sort of militia, for the sake of committing mutual depredations. The butchers adhered to the duke of Burgundy, and the carpenters to the count of Armagnac. The English were called in to decide these intestine contests, and our crafty Henry the Fourth sent auxiliaries first to the duke of Burgundy, and afterwards to the party of Orleans. Each year was productive of a peace, and in the next war broke out with redoubled fury. An event which took place at this time decided the balance. The insolent treatment of the duke of Burgundy towards the dauphin Lewis, his son in law, and who had lately taken some share in the government, threw the young prince into the

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the hands of the Armagnacs, and obliged the duke to retire to his hereditary dominions.

There was but one thing wanting to complete the misfortunes of a devoted kingdom—foreign invasion, and conquest. The duke of Burgundy, in his present disgrace, once more solicited assistance from England, and Henry the Fifth, who had succeeded to the crown, and was of a vigorous and enterprising disposition, meditated an interposition, more serious than that of his father had been. He landed upon the coast of France on the fourteenth of August 1415, and two months after gained the celebrated battle of Agincourt, one of the greatest victories that ever was obtained over any nation. But however, considerable was this advantage, he was obliged soon after by his inability
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to support the expences of an uninterrupted war, to return home, and to leave the fruits of his success to the disposal of an uncertain hereafter.

The parties in France, instead of being induced to reconciliation, by so formidable an attack on their common country, seemed determined to proceed to greater extremities than ever. The dauphin Lewis, alternately exposed to the insults of both parties, died of grief and mortification. The count of Armagnac, in the height of his power, had dared to seize the treasures of the queen, to defray the expences of the war. His party now proceeded a step farther, and caused Bois-bourdon, who was at this time her favoured lover, to be thrown into the Seine. The dauphin Charles, afterwards Charles the Victorious, was said to be privy to this piece of vengeance. In

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the mean time the queen, irritated at these repeated attacks, entered into the party of the duke of Burgundy, received him to her bed, and agreed to place the crown upon his head to the exclusion of her son. By her assistance he was admitted into the city of Paris, and his entrance was distinguished by the massacre of the count of Armagnac, constable of France, the high chancellor, five bishops, and a number of persons of every sex and age. The air was rendered pestilential by the effects of these barbarities, and the plague carried off multitudes of those whom the sword had spared.

John the Fearless had now triumphed in what is called successful villainy for a period of twelve years. In reality, he had been far from successful. He was perpetually haunted by the demons of guilt and remorse. In his palace he had an apartment
constructed

constructed entirely of stone, and in this he shut himself up every night. In passing from place to place, he caused the persons of his suite to leave a considerable interval before and behind him, that no concealed assassin might approach him at unawares. But, notwithstanding these miserable precautions, he had been more than once exposed to the knife of the bravo. At length he met with the fate he merited. An interview was proposed between him and the dauphin, in order to effect a compromise of the two parties. The scene of their meeting was upon a bridge; an equal number of both parties were admitted, and a barrier was erected between them for their mutual safety. An indiscreet partisan of the dauphin leaped the barrier, others followed, the suite of the duke of Burgundy were astonished and put to flight, and the duke himself killed.

In the midst of this scene of turbulence and confusion, Henry the Fifth once again landed upon the coast of France. A member of the conclave of cardinals endeavoured to dissuade him from his project. Henry answered with apparent reason and justice :

“ Do you not see that France, urged by
 “ an infernal fury, knows no distinction of
 “ subject or prince, and has no power of
 “ recovering her proper tranquillity ? Tran-
 “ quillity in such a country, can only be the
 “ fruit of conquest, and the gift of a victor.
 “ The kingdom demands a master, and I
 “ am the master they want. It is God
 “ that leads me by the hand, and urges me
 “ to deliver this people from their own
 “ madness, and restore them to tranquillity
 “ and happiness, by placing on their throne
 “ their lawful sovereign, the descendant of
 “ king Edward the Third.”

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The miseries occasioned by Henry in the pursuit of this object were extreme. In the battle of Agincourt, he was obliged on a sudden alarm to direct a general massacre of his prisoners. At the siege of Rouen, twenty thousand persons were turned out of the walls, and suffered to perish with cold and famine between the foot of those walls and the camp of the English. The invasion was at length attended with complete success. The English monarch was admitted into the city of Paris. Isabella, unrelenting in her hatred to her son, declared herself in his favour. The duke of Burgundy retained the popular affections even in the tomb; and the dauphin, who was probably innocent of his murder, became the victim of their vengeance. He was proscribed by the highest authorities in the kingdom, and declared incapable of the succession; and upon the death of his

father, which speedily followed, Henry the Sixth, yet in his cradle, was proclaimed king of France. Charles the Victorious had not completely recovered his dominions till the year 1454; and thus the calamities of more than half a century resulted from the alienation of mind of his unfortunate predecessor *.

The latter half of the reign of our Henry the Sixth was not less miserable; but, as the events that distinguish it are better known to the generality of my countrymen, I shall dwell upon them with less minuteness. The malady of this monarch first appeared by indubitable symptoms, in the year 1454, but the partial imbecility that

* Histoire de France par Velly, Villaret, and Garnier, tom. 11, 12, 13, 14. Histoire de la Querelle de Philippe de Valois et d'Edouard III. par M. Gailard. Henault, Abrégé Chronologique. Observations sur l'Histoire de France par l'abbé de Mably.

had preceded it had long rendered his court a scene of faction and disorder. The first minister was violently suspected of having been the murderer of the king's uncle; and, when Henry was no longer capable of maintaining the appearance of royalty, the expedient to which his family was driven was no other, than that of calling to the regency the duke of York, who claimed a prior right to the crown to that of the house of Lancaster who sat upon the throne. Here again, as in France, the resource was brought into play of causing the monarch in a few months to be declared once more capable of performing the royal functions. The duke of York refused to submit to the decision, and the consequence was a battle, in which the unfortunate king was made prisoner. In the beginning of the contest the rights of the prince of Wales were respected, and it was expressly declared that

the regency should devolve upon him as soon as he became major. But civil contention at length opened the way to the most odious extremities; and the son of Henry, a prince of the most amiable manners and the most promising hopes, was at length declared by parliament incapable of the succession. It is perhaps unavoidable in such cases as these that a considerable influence should not devolve upon the royal consort. In France, as we have seen, Isabella of Bavaria was the stain of her sex, and the blot of human nature. After having dishonoured the bed of her husband, she contracted an unnatural antipathy to her son, and strained every nerve to transfer his rightful inheritance to a foreigner. In England Margaret of Anjou was a pattern of heroism and maternal attachment. The claim of Edward, prince of Wales, maintained by her intrepidity, was the subject
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of ten battles, and expired only with his life. At length more successful pretensions placed on the throne the profligate, the hard-hearted and ungenerous Edward of York, and the bloody tyrant king Richard the Third. The memorable contest of Lancaster and York terminated in the battle of Bosworth Field, after a struggle of more than thirty years.

The consequences of the weak government of Henry the Sixth were melancholy in the extreme. The whole race of the English nobility were destroyed in the field, or on the scaffold. Our country had begun to advance in civilization and literature, but ignorance and barbarity returned with gigantic strides. The historian, who searches for the materials of his narrative, finds them fail him at once, and he thinks himself falling back upon the period of the Danish

Danish invasions and the Norman conquest. Liberty had begun to be digested into a kind of system, and a sketch of government was formed under the first princes of the house of Lancaster, not unworthy of that glorious constitution, which has since become the astonishment and envy of the world. But the confusion of the civil wars seemed to put an end to the prospect, and prepared the way for the grinding tyranny of Henry the Seventh, and the barbarous caprices of his infamous son.

Every competent judge of history will acknowledge, that the features of these two memorable periods in the annals of France and England, are not exaggerated in the sketch I have delineated. I am not therefore to be blamed, if they should appear to you, as they do to me, the most calamitous periods that can be found upon record

cord in the history of any age or any country. It is not my object to excite terror but reflection. I should defeat my purpose, if I infused despair into bosoms, which I am anxious to find the seats of firmness and manly courage. But it is weak and pusillanimous to shut our eyes upon our real situation. If we would act wisely, and prove faithful to ourselves and our country, it becomes us to enquire, what other nations have suffered in a situation similar to our own, what reason we have to apprehend from like causes a corresponding event, and what remedies there are, which may, with the greatest probability of success, be applied to counteract that event.

With regard to the resemblance between the present situation of our country, and the instances I have adduced, I wish to say as little as possible. There is not an individual

dual in the island of Great Britain, who more ardently desires the complete restoration of the health of the sovereign, and that for this obvious reason, because there is not an individual in the island of Great Britain who is more perfectly aware of the mischiefs that will result from a partial restoration. But my wishes, however ardent, have not the power of shutting my eyes on the light of evidence. The age, at which the king has been seized with this alarming malady, is extremely unfavourable. Great pains have been taken to arrive at the solution of this interesting enquiry, Whether any considerable number of persons attacked with the distemper in question at the age of fifty years, have been restored to reason? and the result of the researches that have been made, has not been in unison with the wishes and prayers of an anxious nation. If a farther question had been proposed,

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and it had been asked, How many persons, arrived at an age of such maturity, and who have had periods of convalescence and recovery, have ever risen entirely superior to the distemper? the answer would certainly not have been more favourable.

I am ready to acknowledge, that a malady of the nature of that we are considering, is less alarming in the sovereign of a great country now, than it was in the fifteenth century. Formerly it was absolutely necessary, that a king should have a considerable share of personal firmness and energy, that he should even be distinguished for courage and intrepidity, in order by these qualities to keep under restraint the haughty, turbulent, and overgrown barons. Princes in the darker ages, of the most innocent intentions, but of an easy and inactive disposition, frequently lost
their

their thrones amidst the perpetual tumults of civil discord. The situation of Europe is now happily altered. Whatever be the character and talents of a monarch, if he do not violently seek to overturn the constitution, he may grasp the sceptre with security ; and it will frequently happen, that the country will enjoy a high and enviable degree of prosperity under his auspices.

The great requisite of national welfare is a certain degree of stability and uniformity in the public administration. In the numerous changes which marked the commencement of the present reign, are to be discovered the causes of the loss of America. The facility of the king of France in changing his councils at the recurrence of every petty obstacle to the plan that had been laid down, has at length prepared the way for a great national convulsion. But
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the evils that result from such a defect are increased a thousand fold, when the causes of such variations are of an equivocal kind; when, as in the instance of Charles the Sixth, it appears that every set of men, who in turn have access to the royal ear, are able to direct him at their pleasure; when the shades of capacity and imbecility are so nicely blended, that perhaps the most accurate eye can scarcely distinguish them, and the unscrupulous ambition of party can easily twist them to every nefarious purpose; when party, which in its natural state is salutary and nutritive to liberty, is driven to every odious extreme by the struggle of contending sovereignties. At one time the administration will be conferred by the legislature, and at another reclaimed in a manner, oblique, irresponsible, and that shuns the light. The powers of government will be vested in the hands of
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one set of men, but they will hold them by a precarious tenure, incapable of conferring essential benefits on their country, because incapable of foreseeing that the next hour may not reduce them to a private station. In a few months, perhaps in a few weeks, they will be replaced by men of dissimilar sentiments, men introduced into power by an opposite principle, who have no interest in blending and melting the measures of their predecessors into their own, but who will be heated by the unnatural contest, and will place their glory in destroying all that was understood and established and practised in a former period.

The man must have a strong mind, and a steady hand, who can hold unshaken the perspective by which he is to develop the particulars of such a prospect. I have touched the subject with a softened
pencil

pencil. I have not conjured up the demon of civil bloodshed. I have not calmness and philosophy enough, to trace the field of battle; to examine the mangled carcases of the dead, and count the groans of the dying; to enquire how many victims of decrepid age, and of the defenceless sex are sacrificed to the unrelenting fury of the sword; to follow to the scaffold the heroes whom battle has spared, and to behold learning, and wit, and genius, and virtue, and honour, condemned by civil rage under the mask of justice, and mangled by the executioner. I leave the finishing the picture to colder heads than mine, and turn from these melancholy apprehensions to the more pleasing task of stating to you the better hopes I entertain, and enquiring after the timely remedies I desire to see applied.

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I have some confidence in the high degree of civilization, and in the humane sentiments that are diffused among the people of this country; but to whatever they amount, it is in my opinion beyond all question, that circumstances may be so unfavourable, as to supersede the best dispositions that can be supposed prevalent in a nation at large, and to involve them in the most unjustifiable measures, and the most deplorable barbarity. I have some confidence in the honourable and liberal sentiments of the ministerial and parliamentary leaders among us; but it is of the very essence of politics to enforce every practicable precaution against human frailty. The parliament of England have lately shown, that they would not trust to the effects of the humane and liberal sentiments of the present age, in inducing a son to acknowledge the sanity of the intellects of

his father ; and I may be allowed to extend a little more generally so salutary a precaution. It must certainly be admitted, that the charms of power are of a most fascinating nature, and that men have been led by motives of ambition to perpetrate that, against which their sense of honour, their innocence and their virtue, seemed to give us every previous security.

The task, my fellow-citizens, that I have undertaken, is of the humblest nature, and upon which vanity herself could not found any very arrogant pretensions. It is the statement of facts, not the deduction of conclusions. All that I intended to do, and all that I shall be able completely to perform, is to describe the danger, and to leave to greater abilities, and to a longer experience (Oh, that that experience may not be bought at a price

at which even knowledge itself is too dear!} to provide a sufficient antidote. I have promised indeed, to point out to you such remedies as shall suggest themselves against the danger of our situation; and, however inadequate to the performance, I will not withdraw from the engagement. But I feel the powers of my mind shrink before the magnitude of the object. There is a delicacy, a novelty, a complication in the present business, that sets at defiance all the principles of politics that have hitherto been discovered.

Before I enter upon the imperfect hints I shall be able to offer, I must beg leave to state a few of those first principles, which form the hinge of all that is valuable in politics, and all that is dignified in morality. I assume it then as an axiom, that government, in the respectable sense
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of the word, was instituted for the benefit of the people in general, and not for the emolument of a few individuals. In comparison with the magnitude of this object, the immunities of nobles, and the prerogatives of princes, sink into nothing. A nobleman of great political weight and authority, lately asserted, in the most dignified assembly in this kingdom, “ that
 “ the people were possessed of most essential
 “ rights, but that kings and princes had
 “ no rights whatever.” I do not quote this sentiment for its novelty, for nothing can be more trite and obvious in a free country ; but I am glad that such a sentiment has been started upon such an occasion in the discussion of this subject. I would have it recorded in the hearts of the people of England, and incessantly applied to the present painful situation of our affairs. I would have the argument placed

upon its proper basis, and the sentiment universally felt, that, if ever an attention to the gratification of an individual should be brought into competition with the welfare of the whole, and the existence of the community, the former might be regarded in the balance as lighter than nothing.

“ For what purpose was hereditary succession itself introduced into our monarchy?” It was, said the same nobleman, and he confirmed his opinion by the respectable authority of judge Foster, “ as a political expedient, calculated for the good of the community, and to prevent the mischiefs that might accrue to the general welfare, from an elective competition for an object of so great magnitude.” In pursuance of this principle in one great era of our history we superseded all regard to hereditary claim, and

and called to the throne a prince, who could have no pretensions, but what he derived from the free suffrage of the nation.

“ What is the basis of the prerogatives, which our constitution vests in the sovereign ? ” They are not granted as a boon for the gratification of the monarch, but as a trust for the benefit of the whole. They are extensive, because our ancestors were of opinion that the public good required that they should be extensive ; and they are limited, because it would be a solecism and an outrage to common sense, to suffer the first magistrate to possess one atom of authority, the power of exercising which may not at all times be necessary for the good of the nation.

It follows from these principles, that the interests of the prince upon the throne can in no case be entitled to distinct considera-

tion. As they respect his public character, they cannot be separated from the interests of the people ; and in any other view he is a private individual, whose pleasures it would be high treason against the rights of mankind to bring into competition with the welfare of millions. He is merely the instrument, the first servant of the public ; the absolute creature of their necessities, and who, in every just and rational estimation, ceases to exist when he can no longer be useful.

Considering the subject in this light, can I hesitate to declare what is the only adequate remedy to the evils that impend over us ? It is in the breast of the sovereign alone ; it consists in his RESIGNATION. And, when I say this, I do not mean to doubt of the right of the people to depose their first magistrate. I am sensible of their
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right to depose him, without waiting for any action, upon account of which they might think themselves bound to proceed criminally against him,—of their right to depose him, from the mere consideration of the common interest requiring it. But I say it, because I am well assured that in this case the remedy would be worse than the disease. There are rights vested in the community at large, which it would not be expedient, except in emergencies of the most perilous nature, emergencies that superseded all the rules of established prudence, ever to call into exercise. There are principles, the too frequent practice of which, though the principles themselves are immutable, would carry us at once to the infant state of society, and leave all the work of civilization to be done over again.

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What a picture of true magnanimity and virtue does the remedy I have suggested present to the human mind? Kings have resigned their sceptres for their private gratification, because they were tired of the empty pomp of grandeur, of the never-ending fatigue of public business, of the fruitless dreams of ambition, and the barren gratification that results from the mere exercise of power. Kings have resigned their sceptres from motives of false religion, that they might devote the dregs of an insipid existence to God in the unprofitable solitude of a cloister. Kings have been found, who have terminated their authority and their lives together, by generously devoting themselves to destruction, that their country might flourish in perpetual prosperity. But there would be a calmness of deliberation in the action of a monarch that should retire, because the hand of omnipotence

omnipotence had unfitted him for his high situation, because he foresaw the calamities that might result to the public from his persevering in it, because he felt the impropriety of his retaining possession of a great stake which a moment might induce him, without any fault of his will, to betray or destroy, that would shed upon such a prince a peculiar lustre. It must be an effort of heroic resolution to face the probability of a long period of privacy and obscurity, and calmly to decide in its favour, when power and riches and splendour awaited a contrary determination. And yet may I not add that it seems difficult to adopt a contrary conduct? “ I have received all from the choice of my people. “ I owe all my efforts, and all the energies “ of my frame, as a just return for the “ trust they have reposed in me. I would “ have sacrificed my own ease and gratification

“ cation through a series of years to their
 “ benefit. If then that benefit requires
 “ my resignation, can I hesitate? I shall
 “ at least carry with me into my retreat,
 “ the noblest of all consolations, the con-
 “ sciousness that I have postponed myself
 “ to my people; that, being by provi-
 “ dence intrusted with a crown, I per-
 “ formed the highest office of a sovereign
 “ in preferring the salvation of my coun-
 “ try to every inferior consideration.”

But I quit the discussion of a remedy,
 which, at least in the eye of a political spe-
 culatist, must appear improbable and vision-
 ary. The consideration of it could not in-
 deed have been entirely omitted, consistently
 with the smallest justice to my subject, be-
 cause it is calculated beyond any thing that
 could be devised, to set full before us the
 painful and alarming nature of our public
 situation.

situation: But having mentioned that, which, as I have already said, is the only perfectly adequate remedy, I must now state to you some of those palliatives, which indeed are far from being sufficient to secure us against the dreadful evils that my anxiety for the future conjures up to my imagination ;—of those palliatives which I earnestly hope may be superseded by the precautions of more experienced statesmen, but which are among the best that suggest themselves to my understanding.

I am not disposed to place an implicit confidence in any set of political men ; but, when I consider the high favour in which the present ministers have been held by a majority of their countrymen, I cannot help presuming, that, if not from a disinterested regard for the people of England, if not from the consideration of their honour

nour as men, and the character they must hold with the latest posterity, at least for the sake of gratitude to the nation that has honoured them with an implicit confidence, they will adopt no precipitate measure for the premature restoration of the royal authority. From the nature of the case, it is not improbable that the deliberation will be thrown exclusively into their hands. Few of those public characters, who conceive that their pursuits and their talents fit them to direct the affairs of government, will be hardy enough to utter indelicate personal truths, which from their nature must wound in the tenderest point the private feelings of the monarch. The country gentlemen indeed are not likely to be warped by the considerations of office and emolument; but the man whose acquaintance with the science of politics is not extremely superficial, will not want to be told,

told, that their forte is not penetration ; that they are continually attracted by a frothy plausibility, and deterred by the unprecedented flights of a true political genius ; and that in the most important affairs their attention is frequently fixed upon motives of precedency, and rank, and decorum, and gratitude, when the subject required that nothing should be listened to but arguments of immutable and everlasting importance. Were it otherwise, it is the glory of the press, that subjects may in this form be freely discussed, which are too tender and too sacred for the argument of a public assembly. If then few persons would be found, who, by an ill-placed timidity, would not be deterred from committing scruples like these to the press, who shall expect that the salutary argument will be maintained in either house of the legislature ?

But

But if public men should at this time prove silent in their animadversions upon the conduct of ministers, I would not have it imagined that they will be unobservant of their proceedings. I will even suppose, that caution and jealousy will now be laid aside, that a certain ebriety and madness will seize the minds of the nation, amidst the sincere congratulations of all men upon his majesty's recovery. Even in that case the delusion will not always last, the day of account will ultimately come, and the retribution will only be the more severe the longer it is deferred. Extraordinary and unjustifiable measures have doubtless in various instances been adopted for the acquisition of that universal idol of all enterprising men, power. But a more unjustifiable and a more criminal expedient was never attempted, than would be the adoption of a hasty and precipitate conduct

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in a matter that essentially includes so much of deliberation and doubt, and hesitation and diffidence. Can it then be supposed, that men, who have so long worn the garb of principle and decency, can reconcile themselves to the throwing off, without any previous gradation, every veil of plausibility, and boldly launching into a line of dishonour and profligacy, which must immediately detect them to all discerning men, and ultimately expose them to the contempt and scorn of every human being?

The gradations from madness to sanity are the most difficult to be traced of almost any thing that can fall under the examination of the human mind. We frequently associate with a man for days together, and entertain not the remotest

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suspicion that he labours under any disorder of his intellects, when perhaps without any previous preparation he bursts upon us with the most incomprehensible absurdities. How difficult is it frequently found in the business of a testamentary bequest, a mere feather in comparison of the slightest public concern of a great nation, to settle from the minutest evidence in a court of justice, whether the faculties of the testator were in such a state as to render him competent to a disposition of his property? It is a trite observation, that a man shall be disordered upon a particular subject, and upon all others shall reason with the most perfect propriety and judgment. A masterly representation of such a character is exhibited by Dr. Johnson in his celebrated work of the Prince of Abyssinia. In the well-known case of lord Ferrers,

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Ferrers, though deliberately tried before the greatest court of justice in the world, is it not to this day the opinion of numbers, that a man of rank was condemned to the most ignominious punishment for an action perpetrated when he was incapable of moral agency? Is it not almost the universal opinion that lord George Gordon is a maniac? And yet under this general prepossession, was he not a few years since tried for his life; and is he not now suffering under one of the severest sentences that was ever awarded in a civilized country? Let it be remembered, that in these cases there was no great and weighty interest operating upon the minds of a number of men, and stimulating them to take measures to ascertain the malady. Let it be remembered that the person last mentioned never laboured under the known

and unquestionable symptoms of lunacy, and that it has on that account been the more difficult to establish a strong presumption or a cogent body of evidence in proof of the imputation.

Taking into our minds all these considerations, it seems absolutely necessary that a long quarantine or course of probation should be performed in any case of a similar nature that should be deeply interesting to the national welfare. It is not a few days, or a few weeks, that should be deemed sufficient to satisfy a whole people, who have every claim to the most scrupulous solution of their doubts. The monarch, as soon as it should be thought proper to prepare the way for making the state of his health a subject of national consideration, should be sedulously exhibited

hibited to the curiosity of his people. His levees should be renewed; he should frequently resort to the usual places of public amusement, long before his period of convalescence should be considered as closing, or he should think of resuming the reins of government. Such an event should not take place, till it was loudly called for, not by a giddy and unthinking multitude, but by the voice of all that was, wise and discerning, and respectable among us. In the mean time his physicians should undergo an examination more accurate than any that has preceded, and such as the anxious scrutiny of so momentous an interest must unavoidably dictate. From this proviso it follows, that nothing should upon any account be ultimately decided but in parliament, and that the single step which might prove necessary previously to that

decision, should be the act of an open, full and ungarbled privy council.

An idea has floated among the evanescent rumours of the day, which for that reason I shall mention, though upon no other account is it entitled to the smallest notice. It is, that the first act of the sovereign will be to appoint a temporary regency, intended to continue till the complete re-establishment of his health. It may be remembered for the consolation of the true friends to their country, that this idea was started as a matter of doubt by Mr. Sheridan in the late debates upon the regency bill, and unequivocally contradicted by the chancellor of the exchequer, the master of the rolls, and the attorney-general. By these authorities it was expressly affirmed, that the king had in no
case

case the power to delegate his authority while he remained within the realm. Are we then to suppose, that he will be advised to quit the kingdom for the express purpose of colouring the exercise of so unjustifiable an authority? Or is parliament to bring in a bill, declaring, that, "In consideration of the sovereign's not being in a capacity to exercise the ordinary functions of the executive government, he is hereby authorized to exercise the most unprecedented and important function that can possibly be vested in the hands of an individual?" Or, lastly, shall we imagine, that the king will send a message to the parliament, and that the intended regency will thus be the joint act of an incapable sovereign and a senseless parliament?

The delegating into the hands of others the royal authority, is, of all the functions ascribed by our constitution to the sovereign, that which is pre-eminent and paramount. It is so because it is the extract and sublimate of all the rest. Whatever there is that is great, momentous and comprehensive in the rest, is here concentrated and united. Were we to adopt this proceeding, we should fall at once without temptation, and with our eyes open, into the worst and most ruinous of the measures of Charles the Sixth. What, when the sovereign is said to be recovered, is his first measure to consist in drawing a veil between himself and his people, in retreating from their examination, and demanding from them a blind and implicit faith, beyond all the examples of folly that popery every exhibited?

Till

Till the king is completely recovered, and in all respects capable of resuming the reins of government, he has, in the eyes of sound policy and common sense, not even existence. He is incapable of expressing in a public and constitutional manner, the most insignificant of his wishes; and, if we attend to his wishes conveyed in any other way upon any important topic, we barter all that is valuable to man for a motive fit only to influence a nurse or a dotard. To the last moment therefore of such a situation, a free people will feel what it is that belongs to them, and act for themselves. They will not relinquish a power they have so lately vindicated, that of providing for the necessity of the country; and will say firmly to every one that shall wish to disturb the majesty of their proceedings, " We are superintending the
 " welfare

“ welfare and the peace of millions, and
 “ can pay no attention to the supposed feel-
 “ ings of an individual, which, if they
 “ should happen to interfere with this ob-
 “ ject, would be capricious, rash and dis-
 “ graceful.”

I have said, that, in the present in-
 stance, I am disposed to confide in the
 actual ministers of the sovereign. This
 confidence is certainly not entirely volun-
 tary on my part. It is the only refuge I
 have in the prospect of the most dreadful
 of all calamities, and therefore I acquiesce.
 I regard it as an additional misfortune in the
 present gloomy period, that in the four
 months that have already elapsed of the regal
 incapacity, we have not established a full,
 liberal and comprehensive provision for the
 vicissitudes of convalescence and relapse,
 so

so peculiarly incident to the malady in question. But doubtless the first measure now to be adopted, a measure ten fold more important than the variable question of a regency and restrictions, ought to relate to this business. It will perhaps be an advantage, if, in consequence of the new complexion of the affair, ministers should think fit to suspend the progress of the regency bill. Whatever may be deemed to be the merits of that bill in other respects, the provisions it suggests on this head are extremely superficial and inadequate. The view of the subject that now forces itself upon us should teach us new anxiety and caution. The convalescences, which before existed only in idea, and respecting which we must have been uncertain whether they would ever occur, have actually displayed themselves. For a case that is now
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in existence, and may again recur in the course of a few uncertain months, we cannot provide with too enlightened a vigilance.

It was my original intention to have entered now into the consideration of the heads of which such a system ought to be composed. But I have done enough. The seeds of such a system are contained in my preceding arguments. In the mean time my object has been rather to awaken the true principles of understanding in others, than to specify the conclusions from those principles, and to point out the channel into which the general activity should flow, than to sound the depths of the channel, and measure the course of the stream. It will be better to suffer the thoughts of men gradually to ripen, and their minds to feel their

their force in this momentous business, than to attempt to forestall that established progress of the human mind, without which true excellence was never attained.

F T N I S.